

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE MATRIMONIAL CAUSES BILL.

*By the* BISHOP OF DOWN.

May I express gratitude to Major Leonard Darwin for his discussion of the questions raised by the above Bill, and for his clear statement of the fear which so many of us have that the proposed legislation "would tend to demoralise the nation by lessening the regard in which marriage is held."

Allow me to present another side of this question, which, though implied in much that Major Darwin says, is not, I think, definitely stated. The promoters of the Bill are trying to persuade us that one of its principal effects, if carried, would be to encourage parenthood amongst the higher types. A long experience of social work amongst all classes of the community convinces me that those who hold this view are profoundly mistaken. The lower types mate and breed with freedom, because they have little thought of consequences, and also because, with large classes of them, children are regarded as a provision for old age. It is quite possible that, in these classes, great freedom of divorce and re-marriage would tend to a more rapid increase of population. But the effect, in classes of higher type, would, I hold, be exactly the opposite. We are now dealing with men and women who look before and after, who consider consequences, and who know that children, instead of being a provision for old age, are apt to make great demands on their parents' resources after many years. In such circumstances, a young man or a young woman, thinking of marriage, will be very likely to reflect as follows: "Marriage is a very uncertain thing nowadays; if we don't quite hit it off, we can very easily separate; I don't feel as if this were possible now, but who knows how I shall feel in a few years' time; it is therefore very much wiser for us to have no children." The man or the woman who begins married life with the conscious, or even sub-conscious, idea that a marriage is, after all, only a "trial trip," will most certainly try to avoid the responsibilities and complications of parenthood.

When people are united by a bond that they confess to their own hearts to be indissoluble, and when that inner consecration of life is guarded by an outer sanction which has behind it the law of civilised humanity, then every responsibility is cheerfully undertaken. Destroy the outer sanction and the inner consecration will vanish in a multitude of cases; and with it will go the loving devotion of heart and life to the joyful pains and sacrifices of parenthood. No more certain means of checking parenthood amongst the higher types could be devised than that which will be established if the Matrimonial Causes Bill becomes the law of the land.

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In the January issue (p. 326) there was a note by "N. A." which calls for comment. It was a criticism of a newspaper article by the Right Hon. J. M. Robertson, M.P., in favour of birth control, and it contained the statement that "one may question whether it is either just or desirable to use poverty *per se*, minus any qualifying adjective, as a bar to even extensive parenthood." As the note proceeded to say that "eugenists are concerned with biological fitness, which is not necessarily a concomitant of economic stability," it did an injustice to Mr. Robertson. His remarks were not based on eugenic, but on economic, considera-